Salmagundi

A Spinster Deals With Death
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A Spinster Deals With Death

BY GINA WHITE

They'd come and put their glass-eyed house to face
My own across the cut-down trees, and yet
I liked that grave-eyed boy of theirs
With such a swagger for his seven years.
She must have sent him off somewhere, I thought;
He wasn't even at the funeral,
And hadn't been to my back door in days.
So, when he finally came, it startled me
The way he used the words, "You heard the news?"
As though he'd heard the women call me up
To ask just how he died across the street.

I never said to them, how should I know,
Of course he must have had good reason why
He died the way he did. That's his affair,
Just as the one between yourself and life
Is yours, and not to share with anyone.

And then I said to Paul that yes I'd heard
The most important news about his father's dying.
As level as the land he looked at me
So that I didn't use the comfort words
The way some people do at times like these.
He knew too well that it embarrassed me
The way his father had to go and die,
And what an onlooker of life I was,
How much a frightened stranger still to death.
So he just kicked a rock, looked up, and said,
"You mustn't mind. Sometimes you have to die."

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